Since their introduction to the U.S. market in 2007, e-cigarettes and vaping devices—tobacco harm reduction products that are 95 percent safer than combustible cigarettes—have helped more than three million American adults quit smoking.

1. Economic Impact
According to the Vapor Technology Association, in 2018, the industry created 5,353 direct vaping-related jobs, including manufacturing, retail, and wholesale jobs in Florida, which generated $198 million in wages alone.1 Moreover, the industry has created hundreds of secondary jobs in the Sunshine State, bringing the total economic impact in 2018 to $1,479,220,800. In the same year, Florida received more than $82 million in state taxes attributable to the vaping industry. These figures do not include sales in convenience stores, which sell vapor products including disposables and prefilled cartridges. In 2016, sales of these products in Florida eclipsed $41.7 million.2

2. State Health Department Data
As of January 7, 2020, the Florida Department of Health (FDH) has reported 110 cases of vaping-related lung illness, including two deaths.3 Although other state health departments have provided additional patient information—including age, gender, and substances vaped—FDH has only reported the total number of cases. This is alarming because many state health departments have already linked vaping-related lung illnesses to the use of products containing tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and provided this information in their own updates. The Heartland Institute gives FDH a grade of F for information available on vaping-related lung illnesses.

3. More Information Needed
The most recent report on youth e-cigarette use in Florida is from the 2019 Florida Youth Tobacco Survey, which found that in 2019, 25.6 percent of Florida high school students reported using a vapor product at least once, in the 30 days prior to the survey.4 There is no information on frequent and/or current use in the 2019 survey. More data is needed to understand the effects of public health campaigns on youth e-cigarette use.

4. Youth Sales Miniscule
From January 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) administered 19,354 tobacco age compliance inspections in Florida, in which the agency used a minor in an attempt to purchase tobacco products.5 Of those, 3,703 or 19 percent, resulted in a sale to a minor. Of the violations, 648 (17 percent of violations and 3 percent of all compliance checks) involved the sale of e-cigarettes or vaping devices. The number of violations involving sales of cigars and cigarettes were 1,860 and 1,161, respectively, during the same period.

5. Misspent Money
In 2019, Florida received an estimated $1.5347 billion in tobacco taxes and tobacco settlement payments. In the same year, the state spent only $70.4 million, or 4 percent, on funding tobacco control programs, including education and prevention.6

Policy Solution
Electronic cigarettes and vaping devices have proven to be tremendous tobacco harm reduction tools, helping many smokers transition away from combustible cigarettes. Despite recent fearmongering, their use is significantly safer than traditional cigarettes, as noted by numerous public health groups including the Royal College of Physicians,7 Public Health England,8 and the American Cancer Society.9 Rather than restricting their use, and undoubtedly reducing public health gains and millions of dollars in economic output, lawmakers should dedicate existing tobacco funds on programs that actually reduce youth use.

Key Points:
1. Florida’s vaping industry provided more than $1.5 billion in economic activity in 2018 while generating 5,353 direct vaping-related jobs. Sales of disposables and prefilled cartridges in Florida exceeded $41.7 million in 2016.

2. As of January 7, 2020, FDH has reported 110 cases of vaping-related lung illness, including two deaths. FDH does not provide information on age, gender, and substances vaped. FDH earns an F for its lack of transparency on vaping-related lung illnesses.

3. In 2019, 25.6 percent of Florida high school students reported using vapor products on at least one day in the previous 30 days. There is no information on frequent and/or daily e-cigarette use. More data is needed.

4. Only 3 percent of FDA retail compliance checks in Florida resulted in sales of e-cigarettes to minors from January 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019.

5. Florida spends very little on tobacco prevention. In 2019, Florida dedicated only $70.4 million on tobacco control, or 4 percent of what the state received in tobacco settlement payments and taxes.
References

1. Vapor Technology Association, “The Economic Impact of the Vapor Industry FLORIDA,” 2019, https://vta.guerrillaeconomics.net/reports/db0f6ab4-dc23-4fe4-acfe-3212ea3a0f8c/


For more information, please refer to:

Tobacco Harm Reduction 101: A Guidebook for Policymakers
https://www.heartland.org/publications-resources/publications/latest-heartland-policy-booklet-addresses-vaping-myths

This booklet from The Heartland Institute aims to inform key stakeholders on the much-needed information on the benefits of electronic cigarettes and vaping devices. Tobacco Harm Reduction 101 details the history of e-cigarettes, including regulatory actions on these products. The booklet also explains the role of nicotine, addresses tax policy and debunks many of the myths associated with e-cigarettes, including assertions about “popcorn lung,” formaldehyde, and the so-called youth vaping epidemic.

Nothing in this Policy Tip Sheet is intended to influence the passage of legislation, and it does not necessarily represent the views of The Heartland Institute. For further information on this and other topics, visit the Budget & Tax News website, The Heartland Institute’s website, and PolicyBot, Heartland’s free online research database.

The Heartland Institute can send an expert to your state to testify or brief your caucus; host an event in your state; or send you further information on a topic. Please don’t hesitate to contact us if we can be of assistance! If you have any questions or comments, contact Heartland’s government relations department, at governmentrelations@heartland.org or 312/377-4000.